

Doing a Quality Management Position Abroad

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Opening

In 2007 after working for 11 years in the same company, I received an offer to relocate to Montréal, Canada for a position of Quality Manager. Here I am, with no early experience on this role, in another country, different culture, new company, new people. I was well motivated but it was not something I could prepare myself for: this was and still is a very new experience for me.

Analysis of the situation:

Quality management in the modern world deals with a variety of subjects. Most of the subjects are more diversified and cover many areas of the company. In order to be able to cover such topics, the Quality Manager needs to expand his knowledge in the different areas, to be able to learn from other parties (other Quality Managers), companies and benchmark. In that aspect I had the benefit from previous roles I have performed in the past, but was lacking the experience of being a Quality Manager before.

Two major things assisted me in achieving where I am today:

1. I took part and leadership in real live projects, so I became part of the team.
2. Training and coaching in the Quality profession, including the ICMQ exam.

Things I did not do - and would help me?

I think a solid group of people that deals with the same materials can be a good learning environment. I did not find this kind of team and I miss that a lot. I could benefit from such a forum in a lot of ways.

The process stages:

The process of finding the right combination of being a part of the team and have an impact as a Quality Manager at the same time resulted from the following stages/phases:

Stages:

Stage	Learning	Involvement	Impact	Assimilation
Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪Met with people▪Defined the list of cooperators▪Learned the processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪Taking other managerial tasks▪Highly involved in the day to day projects	Create an impact	People attended me for assistance
Output	"how do we do business here"	based my position with the team	Basing my perception	I start to base my role

Learning

For the first few months, I studied the organization. At this stage I met with people, defined the list of co-operators and learned the processes (or should I say "how do we do business here"). Putting all that together, I started to build the picture, the puzzle.

Involvement

In order to start working together with the people, I was highly involved in the day-to-day projects not in a position of a Quality Manager, but rather taking other managerial tasks.

Impact

Being more into the details of the projects, I picked a few important tasks that I could create an impact. This helped me in basing my perception.

Assimilation

At this stage people already were asking me what will be my next project? If I can assist them in project X or Y, that gave me the feedback from which I started to base my role.

Conclusion:

I realized that when working in a new environment that involves a different culture, my personal "glasses" might not fit any more. It took me a while to realize that. Being in a position of a Quality Manager might give one the feeling of being alone, it is them and I. Being a Quality Manager abroad in a new country and culture might even emphasize the feeling. It is our task to improvise and change the way we might be perceived.